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AUTHOR Gotlieb, Howell; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of a preventive multimodal school-based program designed for the development of prosocial behavior in kindergarten children. Because the theoretical orientation was preventative and ecologically based, the Kindergarten Intervention Project (KIP) involved components for teacher support, parent involvement, and direct services to children. Overall goals of the project were to provide a coordinated effort to help with the children's social adaptation to the classroom and reduce the severity and incidence of behavior difficulties in the target population. Specific goals were articulated for teachers, parents, and students. The 431 children participating in the program were compared to a matched control group of 347 students in regular kindergarten classes. Pre- and post-intervention data were collected, including teacher ratings and direct observation of children during free play situations. Results showed that participation in KIP had a positive effect on parents, teachers, and children. Significant increases in children's socially appropriate behaviors and decreases in nonsocial behaviors were observed. Of particular note were significant improvement in teacher ratings of students whose pretest scores indicated poor social skills and high internalizing behaviors. (Author/BB)

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THE KINDERGARTEN INTERVENTION PROJECT:

FACILITATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF

CHILDREN'S

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOURS

Howell Gotlieb, Carolyn Lennox, Reena Kronitz,

Michael Allan, Joan Hart and Elizabeth Read

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Poster presented at the Society for Research in Child Development Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 93

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effectiveness of a preventative multimodal school-based program which was designed for all Junior and Senior Kindergarten children and focused on the development of prosocial behaviour. Because the theoretical orientation was preventative and ecologically-based, the Kindergarten Intervention Project (KIP) involved three components: a Teacher Support Component, a Parent Involvement Component and a Direct Service to Children Component. The overall goals of the project were to provide a coordinated effort to help with the social adaptation of the child to the classroom and to reduce the severity and incidence of behaviour difficulties in the target population. Specific goals were articulated for teachers, parents and students. 431 children participating in the program were compared to a matched control group composed of 347 students in the regular kindergarten classes during the 1991-92 academic year. Pre and post data were collected including teacher ratings and direct observation of the children during free play situations.

Results showed that participation in KIP had a positive effect on parents, teachers and children. Significant increases in children's socially appropriate behaviours, and decreases in nonsocial behaviours were observed. Of particular note were significant improvements in teacher ratings of students whose pretest scores indicated poor social skills and high internalizing behaviours.

LITERATURE HIGHLIGHTS

1. Childhood Aggression -

   - Well-established by age 6 (e.g., Bates, et al., 1991; Eron, 1991)
   - Stable over time (Forehand and Long), 1991)
   - Best understood by a complex interactivesystems model (Patterson, et al., 1991)
   - Predicts ongoing social, academic, vocational and community problems (Patterson, 1982)
   - Prognosis better for children who are prosocial (Eron & Huesmann, 1984; Tremblay et al., 1989)

2. Extent of the Problem -

   - Prevalence of conduct disorders:

     - 9% of males, 2% of females under age 18 (DSM III-R, 1987)
     - 5.5% of Ontario children aged 4-16 (Offord et al., 1991)
     - Up to 30% of children experience milder, but significant, social and emotional difficulties (Offord et al., 1991)

   - Aggressive children constitute a large proportion of the case load of clinical practitioners (Kazdin, 1987)

   - Aggressive behaviours place significant stress on school environments (Lennox et al., 1991)

3. Interventions -

   - Typically minimally effective with aggressive children (Kazdin, 1987)
   - Most effective with young children (e.g., Forgatch 1988)
   - Must address systemic factors (Karnes et al., 1988)
   - Prevention programs are essential (Comer, 1985)

4. Efficacy of School Approaches To Aggressive Children -

   - Expensive: staff time, staff energy and mental health, $$
   - Behavioural programs do not reach many needy students
   - Reactive not proactive
   - Do not reach very young children
   - Lack of evidence of generalization or long-term maintenance of gains
   - Focus on the individual rather than the system (George et al., 1990; Grosenick et al., 1987)

THE MODEL

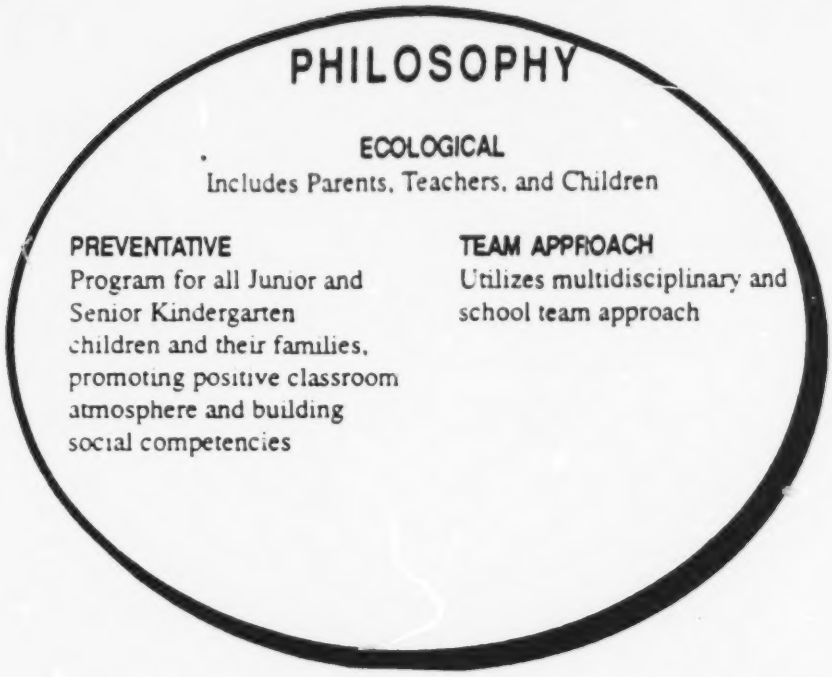
Kindergarten Intervention Project (K.I.P.):

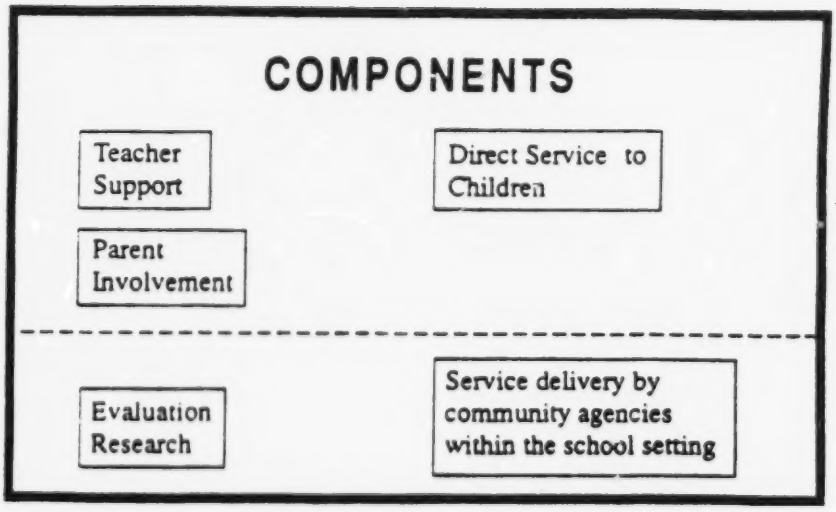
A Multimodal Multidisciplinary Preventative
School-based Program To Enhance Social Development

Objectives:

1. To provide a coordinated effort to help with the social adaptation of children to the school setting.

2. To reduce the severity and incidence of behaviour disorders in the target population.


PHILOSOPHY
ECOLOGICAL
Includes Parents, Teachers, and Children
PREVENTATIVE
Program for all Junior and Senior Kindergarten children and their families, promoting positive classroom atmosphere and building social competencies
TEAM APPROACH
Utilizes multidisciplinary and school team approach


COMPONENTS
Teacher Support
Direct Service to Children
Parent Involvement
Evaluation Research
Service delivery by community agencies within the school setting

TEACHER COMPONENT

Goals:

- Foster an increased awareness of child development
- Assist teachers in developing strategies to promote prosocial behaviours
- Assist teachers in developing strategies to deal with aggressive behaviours
- Strengthen teachers' communication skills with parents

Strategies:

- Collaborative support provided by resource staff
- Classroom visits and modelling by team resource staff
- Professional development workshops
- Regular problem-solving team meetings
- Informal discussion sessions
- Peer networks

PARENT COMPONENT

Goals:

- Promote parent involvement as "equal partners" in their child's social and academic learning
- Increase parents' knowledge and understanding of school program goals and activities
- Give parents strategies for facilitating their child's development
- Foster feelings of competence in the parents

Strategies:

- Strengthen the parent-school partnership including:
  - Classroom newsletters
  - Parent resource libraries
  - Parent visits to classroom
  - Weekly drop-in sessions
  - Family nights
  - Book bag program
  - Parenting workshops

STUDENT COMPONENT

Goals:

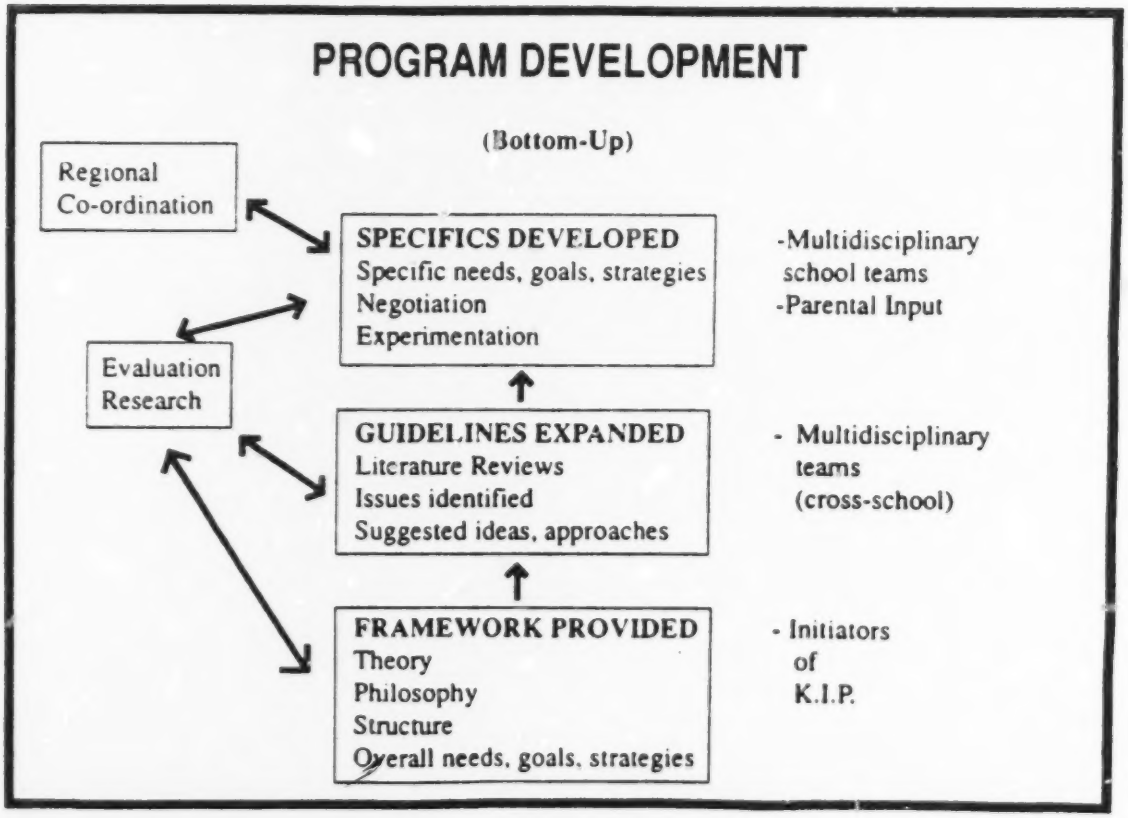
- Promote and reinforce prosocial behaviours
- Develop children's problem-solving skills
- Enhance children's self-esteem
- Prevent the development of aggressive behaviour patterns
- Meet the needs of children presenting with concerns

Strategies:

- Incorporate the teaching of social and emotional concepts into the regular curriculum
- Classroom strategies to promote the development of prosocial behaviour
- Classroom-wide social skill training (e.g., Skillstreaming in Early Childhood, McGinnis and Goldstein 1991)
- School team case management process

IMPLEMENTING
A PROCESS MODEL

- 3-year pilot project (1989 - 1992)
- 4 schools selected -
  - . high risk/high need populations
  - . enthusiastic principals and staff
  - . involved, committed psychology staff
- Bottom-up approach to program development -
  - . overall framework provided
  - . specific programs developed and implemented within each school
  - . regional coordination and sharing
  - . ownership felt by all participants
- Formative and summative evaluation research



EVALUATION RESEARCH

Method

- . Multi-dimensional
- . Comparison of K.I.P. and Control schools (matched on basis of size and demographic characteristics)
- . Pre-post ratings of children's social and problem behaviours
- . Pre-post observations of children's in-class behaviours
- . Self-report data from school and resource staff, and parents

IMPACT ON TEACHERS

Measures

1. Teacher questionnaires (KIP + Control schools)
2. Focus groups (KIP schools)

Results

1. Teacher questionnaires

   Significant KIP - Control differences:
   - increased feeling of support from resource staff ($p>.02$)
   - greater sense of partnership with parents ($p>.05$)

2. Anecdotal comments from focus groups

   Involvement in KIP:
   - increased awareness of their impact on children's social and behavioural functioning
   - increased knowledge of behavioural techniques
   - influenced teaching approach (e.g. focus on positive; incorporate social skills into curriculum; management techniques)

IMPACT ON PARENTS

Measures

1. Parent questionnaires (selected participants in K.I.P. schools only)
2. Teacher ratings (K.I.P. and Control Schools)

Results

1. Parent questionnaires

   Parents strongly feel:
   - sense of partnership with the school
   - welcomed in the school
   - knowledgeable about JK/K goals and activities

2. Teacher perceptions

   A. Significant K.I.P. - Control differences:
   - parents have greater sense of partnership with school ($p<.01$)
   - parents have greater knowledge of classroom goals ($p<.05$)

   B. Anecdotal comments:
   - community view of the school improved as a result of KIP
   - improvements in parent-child interaction; easier parenting

IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Measures

Fall and spring ratings (pre-post) on:

1. Social Skill Rating System (Gresham & Elliott, 1989) a teacher ratings of prosocial skills and problem behaviours. (All children rated; n=431 KIP and n=347 control subjects)

2. Direct in-class observation of children during free play situations - coding of Socially Appropriate, Socially Inappropriate & Nonsocial behaviours (modified from Mize and Ladd, 1988). (Randomly selected subgroups; n=69 KIP and n=58 Control subjects)

Results

1. Social Skill Rating System

   - ALL STUDENTS:

     Examination of pre-post changes revealed that the majority were in the expected directions i.e. KIP students improved more in social skills and showed greater decrease in problem behaviour than control students.
     See Figures 1 and 2

   - STUDENTS WITH LOW SOCIAL SKILLS SCORES (AT PRETEST):

     When compared with control subjects, KIP students at post-testing showed:
     - higher social skills scores ($p<.05$)
     - more self-control ($p<.01$)
     - lower problem behaviour scores ($p<.02$)
     - fewer externalizing behaviours ($p<.006$)

     See Figures 3 and 4

   - STUDENTS WITH HIGH INTERNALIZING SCORES (AT PRETEST):

     When compared with control subjects, KIP students at post-testing showed:
     - higher social skills scores ($p<.003$)
     - more self-control ($p<.002$)
     - higher assertion scores ($p<.037$)
     - higher cooperation scores $p<.01$)
     - lower problem behaviour scores ($p<.007$)
     - fewer internalizing behaviours $p<.06$)

     See Figures 5 and 6

2. Observational Data

   - When compared with control subjects, KIP students at post-testing showed:
     - more socially appropriate behaviours ($p<.041$)
     - fewer non-social behaviours ($p<.03$)

     See Figure 7

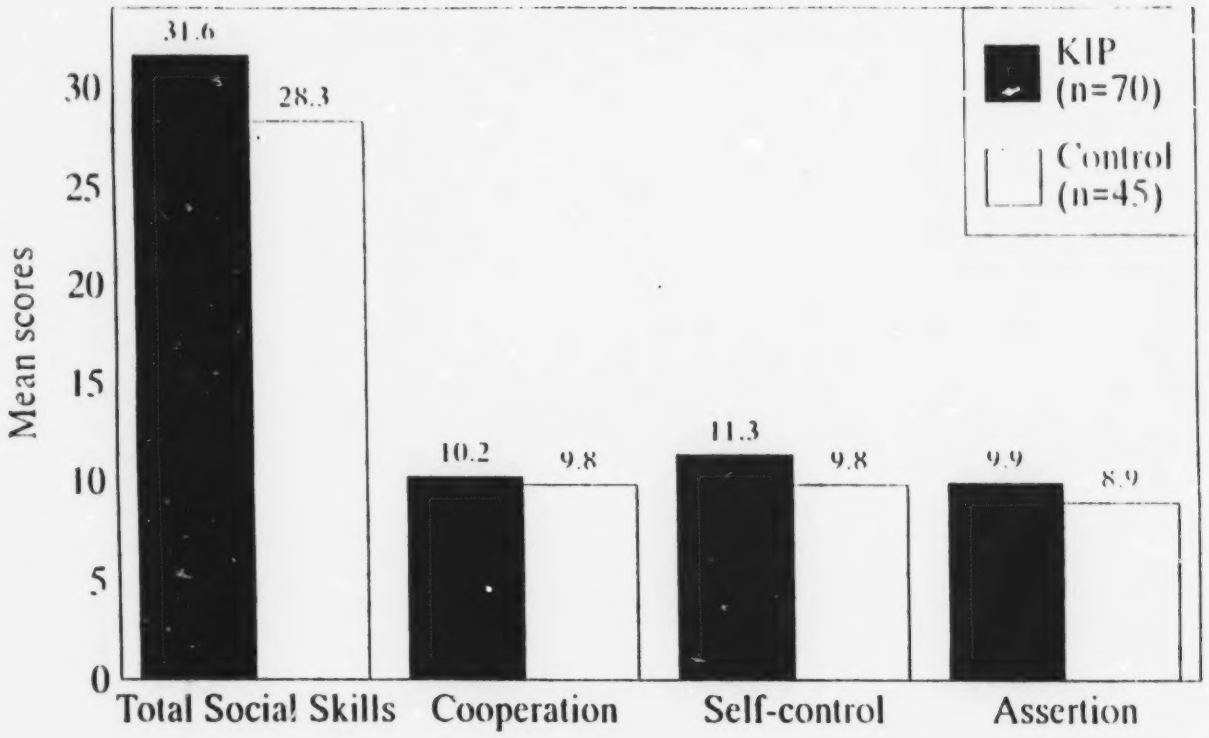


Figure 1
Post-test social skills in students with poor social skills (at pre-test)

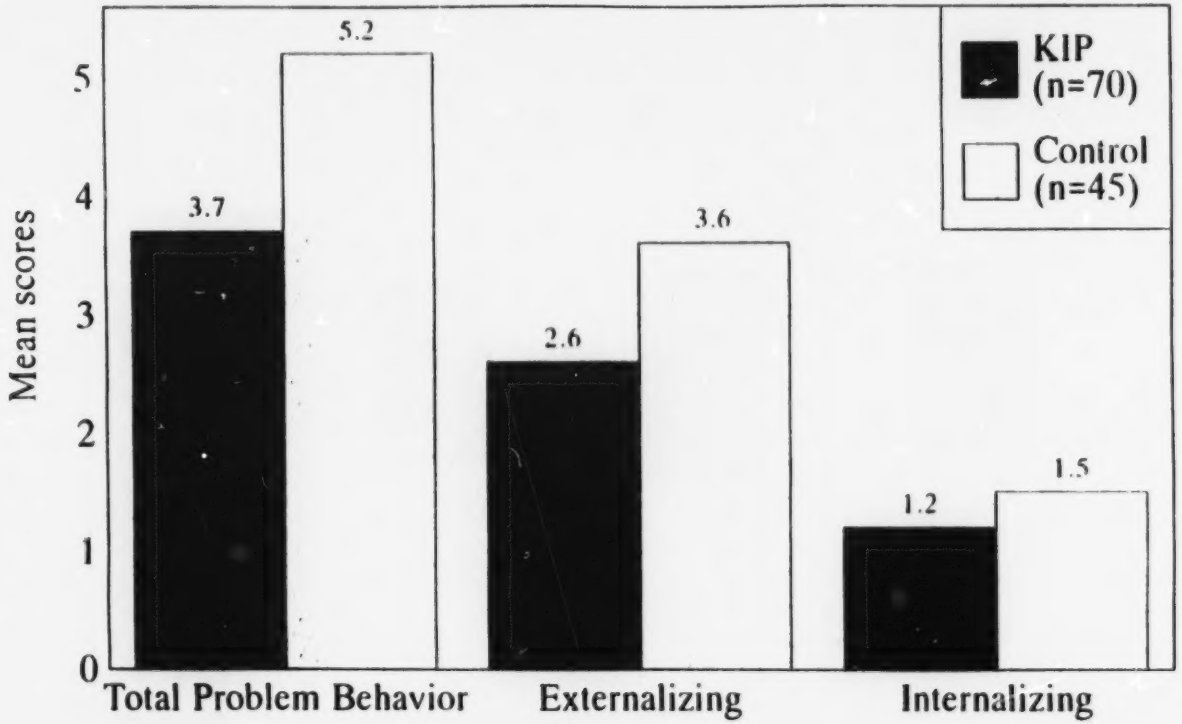


Figure 2
Post-test problem behaviours in students with poor social skills (at pre-test)

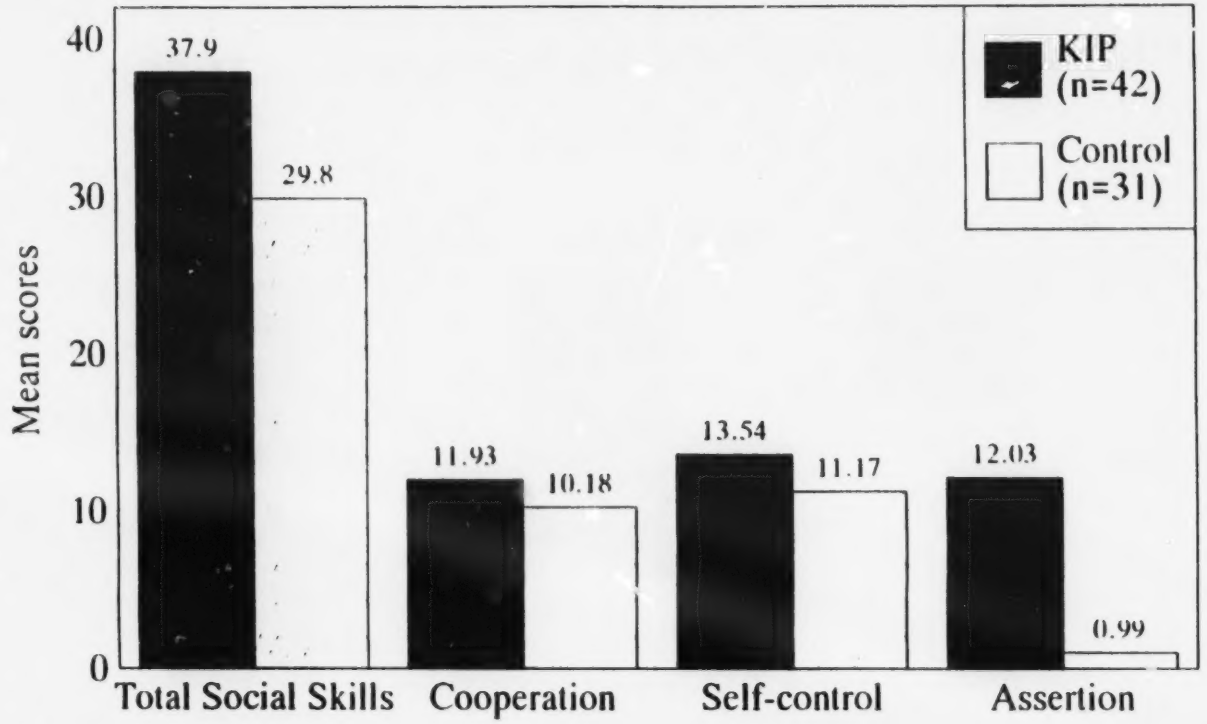


Figure 3
Post-test social skills in students with high internalizing scores (at pre-test)

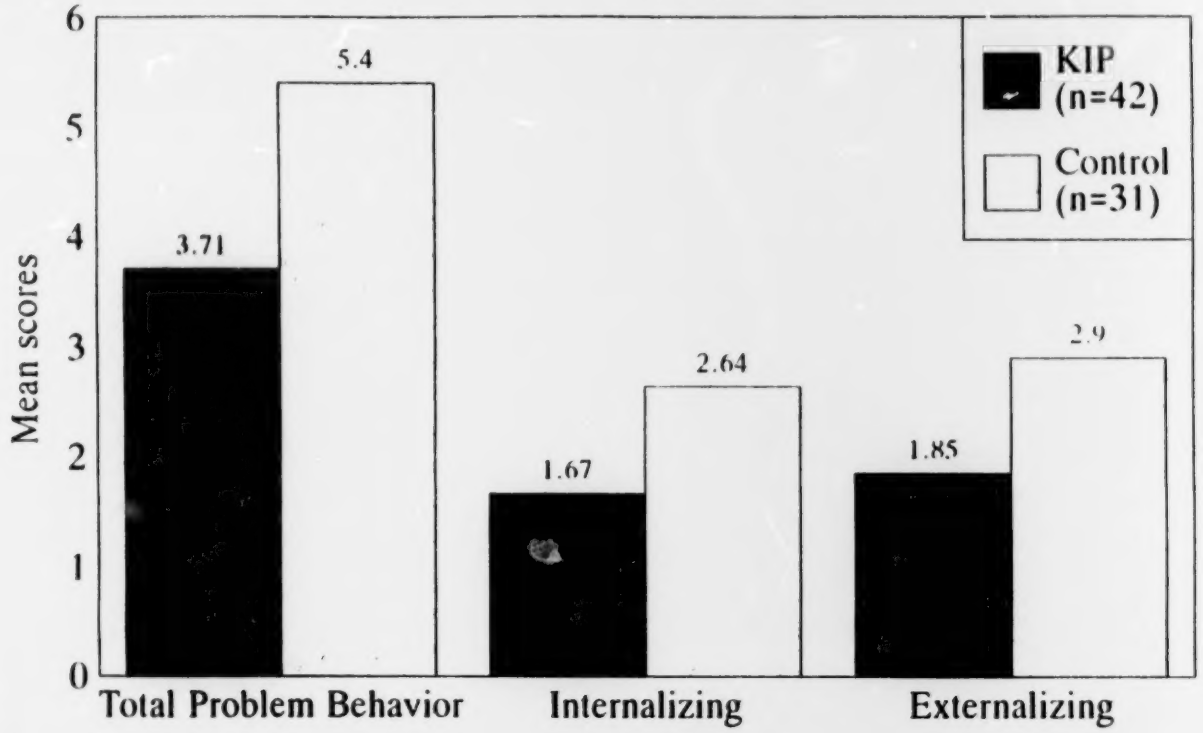


Figure 4
Post-test problem behaviours in students with high internalizing scores (at pre-test)

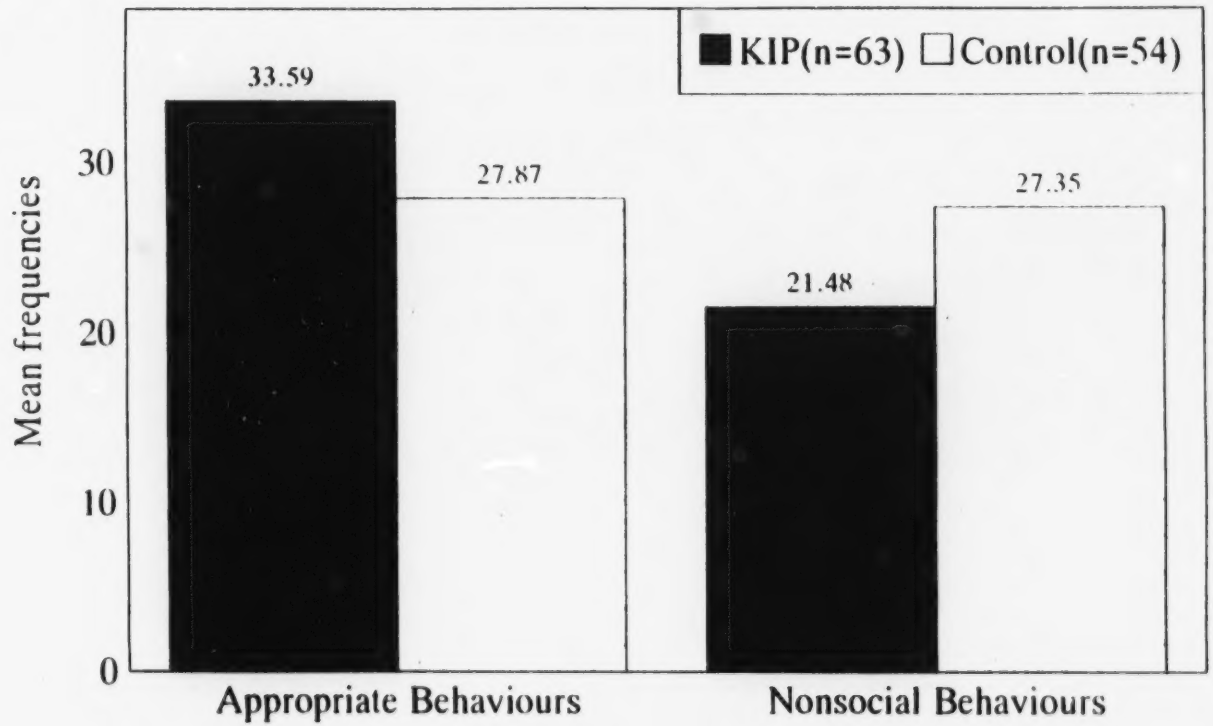


Figure 5
Frequencies of observed behaviours at post-test for children observed

CONCLUSION

This study evaluated the effectiveness of KIP, a preventative school-based program which had as its goals the development of prosocial behaviours and the reduction of behaviour difficulties in Kindergarten children.

The results found that involvement had a significant positive effect on:

- teachers' knowledge base and skill level
- home-school partnerships
- children's social behaviours in the classroom

In addition, subgroups of children identified as having social skill deficits and internalizing symptomatology were found to make significant improvements in social skills and problem behaviours through the KIP program.

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